

9/21/09

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Christine Joyce

From: Nancy Tavernier [ntavern@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2009 9:17 AM
To: Board of Selectmen
Cc: Manager Department
Subject: Suggestion for Old High School funding

Dear Board Members,

I note that Agenda item #12 for your meeting tonight includes an update from the President of Common Ground Development Corp., the developers of the Towne Building housing project. Part of the update includes an explanation for how important local financial support is to the likelihood of the project receiving funding approval from DHCD in October. This is in conjunction with a request that building permit fees be waived for the construction phase. The authority to waive fees rests with the Selectmen. I'd like to suggest an alternative approach.

Early on in the approval process, ACHC recommended and the Selectmen concurred, to provide \$150,000 to be used for the sewer betterment payment and to cover the sewer connection costs for the 15 units. Because the Towne Building has always been in the Sewer District, this is a betterment payment and not a sewer privilege fee but we recommend it be paid up front in any case. The funds are to come from the Pulte Housing Gift Fund. These funds (\$400,000) were privately donated by the Pulte Homes Corporation as part of the special permit process for the Robbins Mill development on Carlisle Rd. and are held by the Town. They are for the express purpose of creating affordable housing. The process we have used is for the ACHC to recommend the use of these funds to the Selectmen, who then approve the expenditure. It is not required that ACHC make a recommendation, the Selectmen are free to do so on their own.

I would suggest that the Selectmen consider committing an additional \$150,000 to make the total local contribution \$300,000 which would equal \$20,000 per unit. In doing this, you could avoid discussion of waiving building permit fees, always a sensitive proposal. The developer would be expected to pay the fees in a normal fashion. This is a town-owned building, and will continue to be so, but it is a private development. All 15 units will be affordable rentals, some will be very low income rentals, and all will count toward the Town's 10%. If this additional contribution helps to move the project up the list, it will be a very good investment indeed. As we know, the building continues to deteriorate and waiting another year for the next funding round is not a good scenario.

Please understand, this is a suggestion from me, Nancy Tavernier, and has not been endorsed by the ACHC. We will meet this week on Thursday and should you need to have our endorsement, we would be happy to discuss it and provide you with the committee's thoughts.

Thank you for your continuing support of this important historic preservation and affordable housing development.

Nancy